

**Talking Points**  
**Unveiling of Highway 61 Blues Marker as “The Blues Highway”**  
**3 p.m., Thursday, May 8, 2008**  
**Tunica**

- Highway 61 is recognized worldwide as the main thoroughfare for the uniquely American genre of music we know as the blues.
- As the most famed stretch of roadway in Mississippi’s storied history, it’s only fitting this highway be permanently and officially designated as the “Blues Highway” to honor the many talented artists whose travels made it come alive as one our most enduring cultural icons.
- All along this highway, from America’s northern border with Canada to New Orleans, are intersections at which blues musicians met harsh realities and tremendous opportunities. And, all along this highway, the statement they were making still resonates today in the form of a uniquely American ... a uniquely Mississippi ... means of expression.
- As a product of the Mississippi Delta, I got hooked on the blues early and have been a lifelong fan.

- Back on December 11, 2006, when we gathered at Holly Ridge to unveil the first historical marker along Mississippi's Blues Trail ... to Charlie Patton ... I said the truly global interest in Mississippi as the "Birthplace of America's Music" is reflected by the fact that our local and state media are supplemented by media from the British Broadcasting Corporation and other media outlets in the United Kingdom.
- Today, we're honored by the presence of media from all over the world, as well as some of the world's greatest musicians and many others from far-flung places. Thank you for coming.
- And, of course, the Blues Music Foundation will have its annual awards show tonight ... for the first time right here in Mississippi, the birthplace of America's music. Isn't it great to be here where the blues began!
- We're happy hosts and hope this isn't the last time you bring this awards presentation here.

- I also see today as a tribute to the dedicated people and organizations who have actively and successfully worked together to preserve our Blues heritage.
- I offer my sincere thanks to the National Endowment for the Arts for its tremendous support of our Blues Trail project.
- I would especially like to recognize the efforts of the Mississippi Blues Commission, the Mississippi Blues Foundation, the Tourism Division of the Mississippi Development Authority, and all of the local partners who have done such an outstanding job.
- The blues are a powerful part of Mississippi's heritage and America's musical history. Through the Mississippi Blues Trail and especially this unveiling today we can capture this distinct part of our history and culture

- People from around the country — indeed from around the world — will continue to come down this highway through Mississippi to learn about and experience not only authentic Mississippi Blues music but also the Blues culture.
- Mississippi encompasses all the wonderful aspects that make America's Deep South so appealing. The music fan will find the Mississippi Blues Trail a fascinating tour. This is the state that spawned B.B. King, Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Robert Johnson and scores of other Blues greats.
- I like to think of this as living history because the Blues is still very much alive here in Mississippi and still a vital part of our culture.
- Mississippi lives and breathes the Blues, and the Blues live and breathe in Mississippi.

- Historical markers commemorate significant individuals, places and events, and help communities promote, preserve, and present their history for the education and enjoyment of residents and tourists of all ages.
- Awareness and education are among the best ways to guarantee the preservations of our state's history. This marker is a tool that will increase public awareness of an important cultural resource.
- On behalf of the citizens of Mississippi, thank you for your support of the Blues, and let's unveil this marker to "The Blues Highway."